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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
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INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000424

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PBTS](#) [PHSA](#) [UN](#) [DJ](#) [ER](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI SEEKS MULTILATERAL SUPPORT ON ERITREAN  
BORDER INCURSION

REF: A. DJIBOUTI 394 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. DJIBOUTI 393 (AND PREVIOUS) (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Djibouti's Foreign Minister called in Ambassadors today to say that the GODJ is now seeking an international fact-finding mission to visit the Djibouti-Eritrean border at Ras Doumeira (adjacent to the strategic Bab-al-Mandeb strait), assess the situation, and assist Eritrea and Djibouti in reducing tensions. He described several Djiboutian bilateral approaches to Eritrean President's Chief of Staff and another senior GSE advisor, but noted Eritrean insistence that it was "acting on its own territory." He said Eritrea refused bilateral discussions, claiming that Djibouti had overly publicized the incident. The FM reported that troops remain only yards apart near the ridgeline of the Ras Doumeira hill that defines the Djibouti-Eritrean border. He announced that he had instructed his PermReps to the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) to request this international intervention. Asked what Djibouti sought, he replied that Djibouti wanted the international community to understand the facts of the situation; advance a peaceful, negotiated solution; help avoid incidents that could lead to a crisis of another kind; convince Eritrea to withdraw troops from the immediate border area (noting that Djibouti would do the same); and begin a process that would result in the physical demarcation of the ridgeline of the hill that Djibouti says is the "unequivocal" boundary between the two countries. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S) Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf convened diplomatic corps representatives on April 30 to protest the recent incursion of Eritrean troops on Djiboutian territory at Ras Doumeira (reftels). In a meeting attended by French, Chinese, Russian, Ethiopian, and U.S. Ambassadors, FM Youssouf displayed photographs clearly depicting a trenchline that he said was 1) dug by the Eritreans over the last two weeks and 2) clearly on the Djiboutian side of the hill ridgeline that he said defines the border. Asked by the French and Chinese Ambassadors if there were at this moment Eritrean troops on the Djiboutian side of the border, the FM said that, after President Guellah's April 22 visit to the border area (ref A), the Eritreans had "returned," and were

now mere yards away from the Djiboutians on the hilltop. (As of today, French military sources confirmed that some 40 Eritrean troops were face to face with about 100 Djiboutian troops). FM Youssef said that Djibouti's principal concerns were 1) that the border be defined and respected, 2) that any incident between the troops be avoided, 3) that this vital area not be militarized on the Eritrean side, and 4) that the Bab-al-Mandeb strait not be shadowed or threatened by a military base.

13. (C) The FM noted that Djibouti and Eritrea have long been peaceful neighbors. He also noted that while Eritrea has "nothing to lose," Djibouti has much at stake in maintaining peace so that it can develop, and does not want the world--especially investors--to associate Djibouti with the words "border crisis." Asked by the Russian and Ethiopian Ambassadors about the timing of the incident, FM Youssef did not draw an immediate link to Djibouti's upcoming role in hosting Somali political conferees from the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Asmara-backed Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS). He noted that Djibouti and Eritrea had long understood that they would work together to improve the road link between their countries at Ras Doumeira, but that Eritrea's recent diversion of the road represented an unwelcome and dangerous step. This briefing was conducted largely in French and English. Immediately afterwards, the FM held a separate meeting in Arabic with Ambassadors from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Qatar, Libya, and the Palestinian Authority.

14. (S) COMMENT: Ambassador will meet later today with the French, Chinese, and Russian Ambassadors to discuss the Djiboutian request for AU and UN attention. These

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Ambassadors shared a concern that this issue be resolved quickly. Post urges close USG coordination with France on this issue and support for multilateral efforts to advance a quick and peaceful resolution that reduces immediate border tensions and avoids any militarization of this vital shipping lane. Post also supports USG interagency efforts to identify and release appropriate imagery of Ras Doumeira to the GODJ.  
END COMMENT.  
SYMINGTON